



**Testimony before the
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
by Sean Mahoney, Executive Vice President and State Director
Conservation Law Foundation
February 14, 2020**

Re: LD 2094 – An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act

Senator Carpenter, Representative Bailey and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sean Mahoney and I am the executive vice-president and state director of the Conservation Law Foundation. I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 2094, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.

CLF, founded in 1966, is a public interest advocacy group that works to solve the environmental challenges that threaten the people, natural resources and communities in Maine and across New England. In Maine for almost four decades, CLF is a member-supported organization that has worked to ensure that laws and policies are developed, implemented and enforced that protect and restore our natural resources, are good for Maine's economy and environment and to address the climate crisis in a manner that recognizes the fierce urgency of that crisis, as well as the need to do so in a just and inclusive way.

There is much to be proud of as the State of Maine celebrates its bicentennial this year. But our history with the Wabanaki Tribes for whom this land was home long before Europeans first set foot here is a shameful one. So too has been the treatment of natural resources during our relatively short period of statehood in comparison with the stewardship of the Wabanaki Tribes for centuries beforehand. As an organization focused on protecting the environment for all people, CLF believes that it is essential that communities that have been disempowered, taken advantage of, marginalized, discriminated against, and/or environmentally overburdened and underserved be empowered to chart their own future in a manner that redresses those injustices. That is particularly the case with respect to the Wabanaki Tribes who have endured such treatment since Europeans arrived in Maine at least four centuries ago.

To that end, we have been very encouraged by the proactive steps that Governor Mills and her administration, and particularly DEP Commissioner Reid, have taken to improve the relationship between the State and the Wabanaki Tribes. But it has also become clear that the relationship will never fully be what it rightfully should and must be without changes to its structure, and particularly in restoring the sovereignty and rights to self-determination of the Wabanaki Tribes. While CLF is not able to comment today with specificity on the 22 consensus recommendations made by the Task Force or the specifics of LD 2094, this legislation is another critical step in achieving that end and we support it.

As with all proposed legislation, we recognize, and will support and participate in, the process where the Legislature, Governor Mills' administration, the Wabanaki Tribes and the people of Maine will aim to resolve issues of concern associated with LD 2094. But we also recognize and support the sovereignty and rights to self-determination of the Wabanaki Tribes and believe that righting the wrong that today is the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act is long overdue.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.